



# Federal Election 2011

## POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Post-secondary education is a critical social and economic investment for Canada. It plays an important role in driving economic growth and innovation, and increasing social and economic equality.

Our post-secondary institutions are an important source of stable jobs and are critical to our training and skill development needs. They are a source of valuable basic social and scientific research, and are on the cutting edge of emerging green technologies.

### Harper Conservatives' Record

The Harper Conservatives have not invested in post-secondary education and their policies have eroded access and affordability.

At the same time the post-secondary education system has become increasingly privatized and corporatized. Underfunding has ensured tuition fees and student debt, corporate sponsored and directed research, increased contracting out of services and jobs, and a reliance on underpaid, contract workers. The consequences of underfunding are completely at odds with a public education system based on the principles of accessibility, affordability and equality.

The emphasis on science and technology, commercialization of research and aspirations to corporatize our campuses through increasing numbers of academic/business

partnerships, corporate research funding, patents and intellectual property rights revenue is a threatening trend that is compromising the quality of our public education system.

### The Facts

- Current cash transfers provided within the Canada Social Transfer for post-secondary education are more than \$410 million short of what would be needed just to restore funding to 1992-93 levels, adjusting for inflation and population growth.
- Underfunding has caused skyrocketing tuition fees, larger class sizes, fewer services and resources for students, and a deteriorating infrastructure. Underfunding also means fewer full-time and permanent staff and a greater number of part-time, temporary and casual staff which affects the quality of services for everyone.
- Since the Harper Conservatives were elected tuition fees have risen almost 20 per cent. The increases are even greater when ancillary fee growth is taken into account. These fees have risen dramatically as universities off-load costs to students and their families.

- Student debt loads are crushing. More than \$15 billion was owed to the federal government in 2010 from student loans. Studies have shown student debt has been linked to lower completion rates, making completion of post-secondary education more difficult for low-income students and their families.
- Support to Aboriginal students has been capped for 15 years which means a real decrease in funding when population growth and inflation are taken into account.

## Better Choices

Crushing student debt has to be eliminated by increasing student grants and improving funding to post-secondary education tied to lowering tuition fees.

We need to invest substantially to fund and improve access for Aboriginal students.

The government should implement a federal Post-Secondary Education Act modelled after the principles of the Canada Health Act.

A new act must be accompanied by a dedicated cash transfer with funding allocated to:

- immediately restore per-capita funding to 1992 levels;
- over three years, reduce tuition fees to 1992 levels;
- over five years, eliminate deferred maintenance at Canada's colleges and universities.

A new government should restore the entire inflation adjusted cuts since the Harper Conservatives came to power from our three federal research granting councils and allocate these funds equally and unconditionally.

A new government should eliminate all incentives to privatize and pursue public-private partnerships on our campuses, and commit to increasing public funding for research, and the operation, building and renewal of our campus infrastructure.